

Statement of Chairman Thomas
Submitted to the Committee on House Administration
March 7, 2001

This statement is submitted in support of the budget request of the Committee on Ways and Means for the 107th Congress.

The 107th Congress is the first Congress in which I have the great honor of serving as the Chairman of the Ways and Means Committee. As Chairman of Ways and Means I look forward to an ambitious and effective Congress that well serves my fellow Members of both parties.

In this Congress, the Committee on Ways and Means faces one of the busiest Congressional sessions in decades.

Several of President Bush's highest priorities fall within the jurisdiction of the Committee on Ways and Means. These priorities include tax relief and reform, Social Security preservation and reform, Medicare modernization and trade promotion.

Each of these Presidential proposals is a complex legislative project. Undertaking any one of these alone would merit increased staff and resources, for both the Majority and Minority. Undertaking four or five in the same Congress makes it imperative that Ways and Means have the staff and resources necessary to expeditiously and effectively act on President Bush's agenda.

Also, we cannot forget that the Committee must attend to numerous issues that while not currently being emphasized are no less important to the proper functioning of the Federal Government.

The Committee also has one additional Republican Member and one additional Democratic Member.

The Committee faces this increased workload with several handicaps. First, the Ways and Means Committee has always been an institution that treasures tradition. As such the Committee has not been quick to adopt new technologies. I intend to change that. The Committee must upgrade its computer systems, both hardware and software and its communications abilities by acquiring a sufficient number of cell phones and other communications devices so that our staff has the tools necessary for maximum efficiency. Second, the Committee has not previously made the full transition to a structure in which the Minority receives a full 1/3 of committee staff and resources. I have already promised the Minority that they will receive a full 1/3 of staff and resources and have begun that transition. However, after decades of a structure in which some staff and equipment was "shared" this transitional period to the new 2/3-1/3 structure requires additional resources. Third, I intend to lessen the dependence of the Committee on the inefficient Government Printing Office. This however requires that the Committee have sufficient staff and equipment.

Even with an ambitious legislative agenda, additional members, field hearings, and a need to modernize infrastructure of the Committee while shifting to an organization that provides

the Minority with a full 1/3 of resources the budget request for the 107th Congress still remains below the funding for the 103rd Congress.

That being the case I believe that this budget request is prudent and reasonable.

Therefore, I respectfully request that the budget request of the Committee on Ways and Means be approved.

If the Committee on House Administration is able to accommodate this request the Republican Majority in the 107th Congress will have taken its first step towards a successful Congress that enacts President Bush's agenda.